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AUTHOR Coley, Joan Develin; DePinto, Thomasina
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ABSTRACT

Reciprocal teaching is a form of dialogue in which students and teachers construct meaning from text. The teacher models the steps of the procedure and gradually encourages students to assume the role of "teacher." Reciprocal teaching involves four strategies which promote comprehension of the text: question-generating, summarizing, clarifying, and prediction. The strategy requires training and teacher modeling for approximately 20 class sessions before students become proficient with all strategies. Originally designed for use with middle school students to use with expository material, reciprocal teaching lends itself to a number of variations. For example, although reciprocal teaching is recommended for small group instruction, it can be adapted to large group instruction where the teacher structures the steps and, at an appropriate juncture, gives students time to participate either as a group or in pairs. Since the question-generating step is the hardest for students to master, the use of question-response cues may be added. These are simple visual symbols to help cue various types of questions for students. (A figure illustrating question response cues is included.) (NH)

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Joan Develin Coley
Western Maryland College

Thomasina DePinto
Carroll County Public Schools

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Reciprocal Teaching : Theme and Variations

Joan Develin Coley
Western Maryland College

Thomasina DePinto
Carroll County Public Schools

Reciprocal teaching is a form of scaffolded dialogue in which students and teachers construct meaning from text. Reciprocal teaching is scaffolded in the sense that the teacher initially models all of the steps of the procedure and gradually encourages students to assume the role of "teacher" (Palinscar & Brown , 1984). Four strategies provide the framework for reciprocal teaching. They are: question-generating, summarizing, clarifying, and prediction. Palinscar and Brown (1986), who have done much of the reciprocal teaching research which has been reported in the professional literature, explain that these four strategies were selected because each strategy promotes comprehension of text, and each is also a comprehension- monitoring strategy in its own right. Despite its reliance on the four strategies. mentioned above, the real heart of reciprocal teaching lies in the fact that it is a discussion strategy whose aim is to have students gradually assume control and do the "teaching" part of reciprocal teaching.

The strategy itself requires training for approximately 20 class sessions (Palinscar & Brown, 1986) before students become proficient with all strategies. In our experience teachers train students in one of two ways depending on the age of the students and the personal preference of the teacher. The first way is for the teacher to model all four of the strategies in one session. That is, the teacher begins by discussing with

students how questions are generated and then proceeds to model some appropriate questions ; next the teacher models a summary of the material which has just been read; the teacher next indicates any parts of the passage which may need to be clarified, and then makes a prediction about the next section of material to be read. It should be noted that with reciprocal teaching, small portions of text are read followed by each of the four strategies; then the teacher moves on to the next small portion of text. Thus, the text reading followed by the four strategies may be repeated several times throughout the instructional period. As the teacher progresses through the training cycle, one objective is to continue to relinquish more and more control of the steps and the "teaching" to the students, so that at the end of the training period, students assume control for the majority of the instructional time. At that point the teacher is available to get the discussion back on track or to provide for whatever scaffolding may be necessary for individual children.

A second method of classroom training which teachers employ is one where the teacher focuses on one individual strategy at a time, such as summarizing or question -generating, and does not move on to the next strategy until students are reasonably proficient with the previous strategy. Still, by the end of 20 days of training , the objective is for students to be able to assume control of all four steps needed for reciprocal teaching.

Variations of Reciprocal Teaching

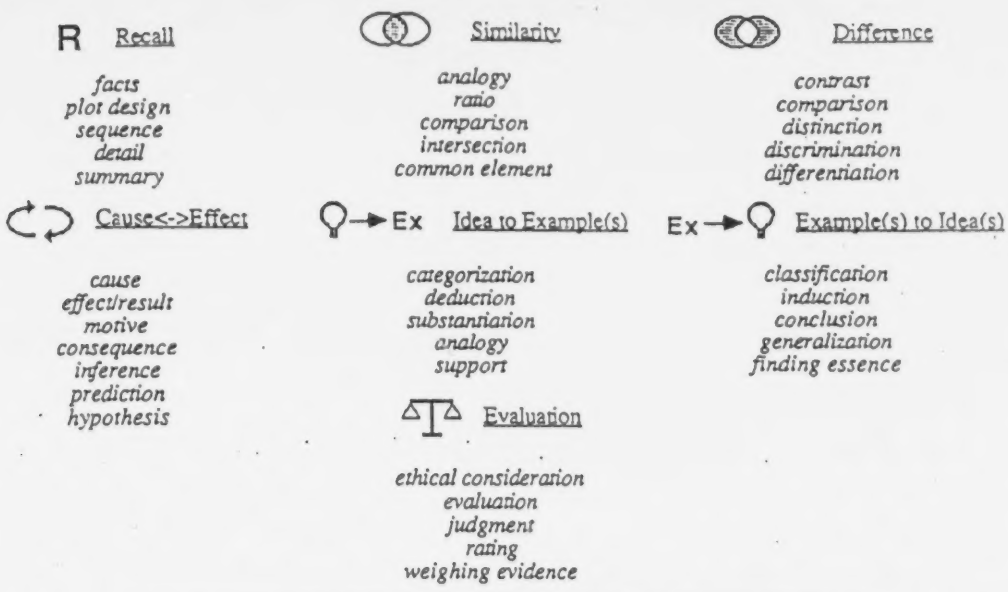
Originally designed for use with middle school students to use with expository material, reciprocal teaching has proven a tantalizing teaching technique which lends itself readily to a number of variations . What follows are two of the instructional variations of reciprocal teaching

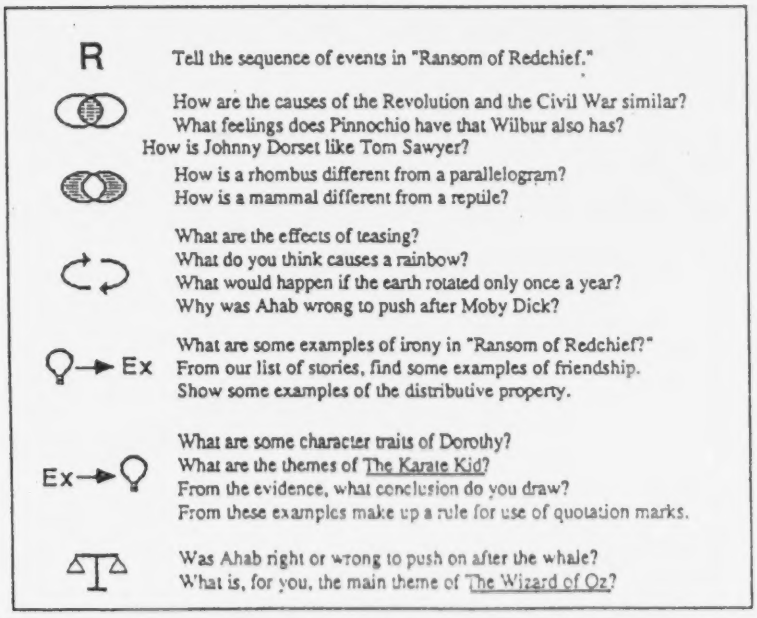
along with a brief description for each.

Reciprocal teaching is recommended for small group instruction with about 8-10 children. Since this is the size of a typical reading group, this recommendation is easily implemented. Moreover part of the raison d'etre for reciprocal teaching is to allow students to have a chance to talk; in a large group it is difficult to ensure that each student can participate. However, there are times both at the elementary level and in the higher grades when it is desirable to have the class participate as a whole. The dilemma is to maintain the active nature of the reciprocal teaching technique while adapting it for the occasional needs of whole class instruction. One solution is to use the Think-Pair-Share strategy. Think -Pair -Share is a three-step strategy which allows all students in the group to participate simultaneously (McTighe & Lyman, 1988). The teacher structures the steps of reciprocal teaching and at an appropriate juncture indicates that it is time for all students to think of a summary, for instance. At a given signal, students are given wait time (Rowe, 1986) in which to think of a summary for that unit of text. When the think time is up, the teacher gives another signal and indicates that it is time to pair with a partner. At this point, both partners share the summaries which they have thought about. They may even decide on a joint summary combining elements of both summaries to produce a more coherent summarization of the text. Finally, the teacher gives the signal that it is time to share. At this point partners or individuals may choose to share their summaries. Using this technique guarantees that even if a student can't share with the entire class, at least he or she has an opportunity to participate in an active dialogue with a partner. The teacher then continues to use the Think-Pair-Share technique with the other three

strategies of reciprocal teaching. When students become proficient with the Think-Pair-Share technique, a student rather than the teacher can direct the children through the four reciprocal teaching strategies rather than have these directed by the teacher. This gets back to one of the original tenets of reciprocal teaching-- student-directed learning.

The second variation which we found useful for reciprocal teaching came at the question generating step. The question-generating step is the hardest one for students to master. This comes as no surprise since question-generating is undoubtedly one of the professional challenges for teachers as well. Teachers have sought to provide assistance with this step as well. Some teachers provide charts with question starters on them. Young children, in particular, need to be reminded of question words like "who, why, or when." Other teachers use a technique like QAR (Raphael, l986) to help students formulate better questions. The technique which we have found most useful involves the use of question response cues (Coley & DePinto, 1989). These cues are simple visual symbols which help cue various types of questions for students (Lyman, 1987). Based loosely on the question types from Bloom's Taxonomy, each type of question is represented by a single symbol. Thus a cause/ effect question is represented by a symbol. As students are introduced to each of the 7 symbols , they are displayed in a prominent place in the room so that they are available for student reference as they generate their questions. The symbols and sample questions generated by students appear on the next page.




R
Tell the sequence of events in "Ransom of Redchief."
How are the causes of the Revolution and the Civil War similar?
What feelings does Pinnochio have that Wilbur also has?
How is Johnny Dorset like Tom Sawyer?
How is a rhombus different from a parallelogram?
How is a mammal different from a reptile?
What are the effects of teasing?
What do you think causes a rainbow?
What would happen if the earth rotated only once a year?
Why was Ahab wrong to push after Moby Dick?
Ex
What are some examples of irony in "Ransom of Redchief?"
From our list of stories, find some examples of friendship.
Show some examples of the distributive property.
Ex
What are some character traits of Dorothy?
What are the themes of The Karate Kid?
From the evidence, what conclusion do you draw?
From these examples make up a rule for use of quotation marks.
Was Ahab right or wrong to push on after the whale?
What is, for you, the main theme of The Wizard of Oz?

Asking questions of different types can be facilitated by mounting cards with the cue symbols as reminders on the classroom walls. As the discussion develops, the teachers (and the students) can use these cues as a guide to construct questions and/or appropriate responses. 9/9/89

Figure 1 Overview of Question response Cues (based on Lyman, 1987)

The combination of strong visual cues and adequate training on question types has made the difference in classrooms between questions that are predominately recall and those which are much more varied.

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Summary

Reciprocal teaching has proven to be a powerful technique for students as they develop skill in getting meaning from text. The two variations which we suggest come from several years of working with reciprocal teaching in the classroom. Think-pair-share makes the technique even more active for students. It is also a variation which allows reciprocal teaching to be used with an entire group of students. Question response cues raise the level of questioning in reciprocal teaching from recall to the higher levels of thinking which we hope all students will develop.

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